

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the very thorough consideration given the present application.

Claims 1-20 are now present in this application. Claims 1 and 11 are independent, and are amended. Claims 1, 3-5, 7-9, 11-15 and 17-19 have also been amended to place the claims in better form.

No new matter is involved.

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Personal Interview

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the courtesies extended to their below-named representative, Mr. Robert J. Webster, by Examiners Rielley and Santiago during the personal interview conducted on August 9, 2006. During that interview, agreement was reached on amendments to claims 1 and 11, the two independent claims that would render claims 1 and 11 allowable over the applied art. However, the Examiners indicated that consideration of these amendments would require further consideration and/or search.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-7 and 11-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,104,132 to Nose et al. ("Nose") in view of U.S. Patent 6,268,688 to Tani et al. ("Tani"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

Independent claims 1 and 11 have been amended to recite a combination of features that Examiners Rielley and Santiago indicated patentably define over the applied art. In view of this, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1 and 11, as amended, are allowable.

Moreover, because claims 2-7 depend from allowable claim 1, and claims 12-17 depend from allowable claim 11, claims 2-7 and 12-17 are also allowable.

Accordingly, this rejection of claims 1-7 and 11-17 should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 1-7 and 11-17 are respectfully requested.

Claims 8, 9, 18 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nose in view of Tani and further in view of U.S. Patent 3,737,703 to Tsuneta et al. ("Tsuneta"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 8 and 9 depend from amended claim 1, and claims 18 and 19 depend from amended claim 11. Moreover, during the aforementioned interview,

Examiners Rielley and Santiago indicated that claims 8-9 and 18-19 patentably define over the applied art because of their dependency, respectively, from amended claims 1 and 11.

Accordingly, this rejection of claims 8, 9, 18 and 19 should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 8, 9, 18 and 19 are respectfully requested.

Claims 10 and 20 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Nose in view of Tani. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 10 depends from amended claim 1, and claim 20 depends from amended claim 11. Moreover, during the aforementioned interview, Examiners Rielley and Santiago indicated that claims 10 and 20 patentably define over the applied art because of their dependency, respectively, from amended claim 1 and 11.

Accordingly, this rejection of claims 10 and 20 should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of claims 10 and 20 are respectfully requested.

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Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Robert J. Webster, Registration No. 46,472, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

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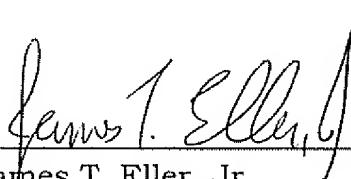
If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: Sept. 26, 2006

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